

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0839

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY

AMCONSUL MONTREAL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUEBEC 0389

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJECT: SHORT SESSION OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CONVENES

1. THE FIRST SESSION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY UNDER THE PQ GOVERNMENT OPENED DECEMBER 14. IN THE OPENING ADDRESS READ BY THE LT.-GOV., NEW GOVERNMENT MADE IT CLEAR THAT MINI-SESSION WAS - AS PREDICTED - A HOUSEKEEPING SESSION TO CLEAN UP OLD BUSINESS. NEW BUSINESS WILL BE LEFT FOR THE FIRST FULL SESSION NOW SCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY.

2. LEGISLATION SCHEDULED TO BE ADOPTED IN FIRST SESSION INCLUDES:

- AN INCREASE IN FAMILY ALLOWANCES OF 8.2 PERCENT
- SUPPLEMENTARY SPENDING ESTIMATES FOR NEARLY 500 MILLION DOLLARS, MOSTLY TO COVER PUBLIC SERVICES INCREASES
- EXTENSION OF RENT CONTROLS
- BILL TO GIVE UNION NATIONAL OFFICIAL PARTY STATUS IN ASSEMBLY AND TO CREATE NEW POSITION OF SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE (WHICH LEVESQUE HAS ALREADY INCLUDED IN HIS CABINET)
- AND A BILL ENTITLED ACT RESPECTING CITY OF MONTREAL DESIGNED OBLIGE MONTREAL TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR 200 MILLION DOLLARS OF THE BILLION DOLLAR OLYMPIC DEBT OR LOSE OUT ON ITS SHARE OF PROVINCIAL SALES TAX.

3. IN DEPARTURE FROM PAST CUSTOMS, OPENING ADDRESS WAS ENTIRELY CONFIDENTIAL

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IN FRENCH. LEVESQUE EXPLAINED LACK OF ENGLISH AS "APPROPRIATE"

AS FRENCH IS QUEBEC'S OFFICIAL LANGUAGE. HE ADDED LAW DOES NOT OBLIGE GOVERNMENT TO USE ENGLISH IN ADDRESSES. MEMBERS, HE CONCLUDED, CAN SPEAK ENGLISH AS ALWAYS SINCE PQ WOULD SHOW TOLERANCE TOWARD QUEBEC'S ENGLISH-SPEAKING MINORITY AND WOULD NOT DIMINISH THEIR RECOGNIZED RIGHTS. (BRITISH NORTH AMERICA ACT MADE BOTH FRENCH AND ENGLISH OFFICIAL IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.) LEVESQUE'S REMARKS - MADE TO NEWSMEN - CAME AFTER JEAN-NOEL LAVOIE, HOUSE LEADER FOR OFFICIAL OPPOSITION LIBERAL PARTY, ROSE ON A QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE TO TERM ABSENCE OF ENGLISH IN ADDRESS AS "AN INSULT" TO NEARLY MILLION AND A HALF QUEBEC CITIZENS. UNION NATIONALE LEADER RODRIGUE BIRON SAID THAT IT WAS NOT "RELEVANT" FOR LIBERALS TO RAISE SUCH AN ISSUE AS THEY WERE ONES WHO ABOLISHED ENGLISH AS ONE OF TWO OFFICIAL LANGUAGES (BILL 22).

4. COMMENT: THE SESSION OPENED WITHOUT SURPRISE AS GOQ CLARIFIED IN VERY FIRST PARAGRAPH OF 5 PARAGRAPH OPENING SPEECH THAT PURPOSE WAS TO TAKE CARE OF URGENT QUESTIONS LEFT OVER FROM PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT. THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION GIVES NO IDEA OF THE NATURE OF PQPROGRAM WHICH WILL COME ONLY NEXT FEBRUARY. GOVERNMENT IS OBVIOUSLY NOT YET READY FOR FULL DEBATE AS STILL FORMULATING POLICIES. PERSONNEL PROBLEMS STILL EXIST AS EVERYONE FROM JUNIOR DEPUTIES TO MINISTERS OF STATE ARE JOCKEYING FOR POSITION (LATTER - IN CHARGE OF PLANNING - ARE REPORTEDLY HAVING DIFFICULTY MESHING RESPONSIBILITIES WITH "REGULAR" MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR DAILY OPERATIONS). IT IS CLEAR THAT GOQ WANTS TO AVOID CONTROVERSY AT THIS POINT SO IT DID NOT REACT TO CRITICISM OF LACK OF ENGLISH IN OPENING REMARKS.

5. IN FACT, OPENING ADDRESS GAVE GOVERNMENT GOOD CHANCE AFFIRM THE PRIMACY OF FRENCH LANGUAGE IN QUEBEC. ANOTHER CHANCE AROSE YESTERDAY WHEN RENE LEVESQUE'S PILOT - RETURNING FROM PREMIERS' CONFERENCE IN OTTAWA - SPOKE FRENCH WITH AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER WHILE OVER QUEBEC. REPORTEDLY, AN AIR CANADA PILOT COMPLAINED GIVING LEVESQUE CHANCE TO REPLY THAT IT WAS "DUTY" OF HIS GOVERNMENT TO DEFEND PILOT'S FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT TO SPEAK FRENCH WITH ITS FULL RESOURCES. IN CONVERSATION WITH ME TODAY, JUDGE ROBERT CLICHE SUGGESTED ANOTHER REASON FOR EXCLUSIVE USE OF FRENCH WAS TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM SUBSTANCE OF LEGISLATION. IF SO, LIBERALS CERTAINLY LEAPED INTO PQ TRAP. PERHAPS,  
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GOVERNMENT WAS DEMONSTRATING SENSIBILITY TO ENGLISH SENTIMENTS WHEN CLEMENT RICHARD, NEWLY ELECTED PRESIDENT OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, FINISHED HIS SHORT SPEECH WITH QUOTE IN ENGLISH FROM BERTRAND RUSSELL. GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO CHANGE OTHER FORMALITIES IN ASSEMBLY, TOO, INCLUDING INTRODUCING APPLAUSE RATHER THAN DESK-THUMPING FOR APPROVAL, THUS SUBSTITUTING FRENCH PARLIAMENTARY STYLE FOR BRITISH. IF FIRST DAY IS ANY INDICATION, IT APPEARS THAT 70 PQ DEPUTIES WILL BRING TO ONCE

ROWDY NATIONAL ASSEMBLY A MORE SOLEMN, DELIBERATIVE, EVEN  
INTELLECTUAL AIR WHICH USUALLY CHARACTERIZES PQ PARTY CAUCUSES  
AND REGIONAL MEETINGS.  
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